

“...art is born out of life and life is a mystery, an ongoing transformation. “

-Antonio Lopez Garcia

Spanish painter 1936-

Joseph Salerno records the passage of time with a palpable devotion. His multiple series of paintings are entitled “Woods Edge”; they depict seasonal and diurnal changes at the margin of the woods in an often haunting manner. The four pieces shown here are a tiny selection from hundreds that Salerno has painted over the years of the woods near his Johnson, VT home. The oil studies are most powerful when seen together as they form an ongoing meditation on the shifting character of familiar woodlands.

Salerno’s work is a record of his experience outdoors and his commitment to direct observation. But his work is the antithesis of illustration. It is not showing us what the woods look like- but rather what the woods feel like in the time space continuum. How do these small paintings transmit the silence and gravity of the forest so well? One gets the feeling from each piece that the day is in the process of getting darker or lighter, and that every moment is dramatically different than the next.

Compositionally, the majority of paintings in the “Woods Edge” series have two foreground tree trunks. These strong vertical elements form a doorway- a liminal passage- to the dark forest beyond. At times the invitation to pass through the portal is inviting, and at other times- a dare. The opposites of light and dark, abstraction and realism, foreground and background are provocative. What lies beyond?

Joseph Salerno works out of his studio in Johnson Vermont and is on the Arts faculty at Northern Vermont University. An exhibition of his work will be at Alex’s Gallery, in Waterbury VT from February 26-April 11,2019.

He is represented by Furchgott-Sourdiffe Gallery in Shelburne, VT, Mitchell Giddings Fine Arts in Brattleboro, VT and the Ober Gallery in Kent CT.

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